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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the recommendations of a panel evaluating the draft proposal prepared by the International Information Centre for Terminology (Infoterm) for the development of a network for terminology and documentation. These recommendations, which have been incorporated into the final study (see related document) include: (1) the establishment of a network, to be known as TermNet, as the most suitable framework for a successful cooperative program; (2) Infoterm would be the most appropriate body to initiate the organization of the network, and it should assist the new network in the coordination of activities, information dissemination, and organizing meetings; and (3) the implementation of TermNet should begin as soon as possible. It was also recommended that Infoterm begin the first phase of the network by contacting and disseminating questionnaires to supernational organizations to determine areas in which they would wish to seek collaboration in terminological information and documentation. (JPF)

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

REPORT ON
THE MEETING FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NETWORK FOR TERMINOLOGY INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION PREPARED BY Infoterm

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October 19-21, 1977, Vienna

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0 Introduction

In accordance with a decision taken by the Bureau of the former UNISIST Steering Committee an evaluation panel was constituted to report on a study on the development of a network for terminology information and documentation. This study had been prepared by the International Information Centre for Terminology (Infoterm) as a direct result of:

1 Infoterm Symposium, April 9-11, 1975

2 Evaluation of Infoterm, June 1-3, 1976.

The meeting took place in Vienna 19-21 October 1977.

(1) Participants:

Mr. B. de Bessé (France)
Mr. H. Dreier (Federal Republic of Germany)
Mr. P. Le Quellec (Canada)
Mr. M. Roudný (Czechoslovakia)
Mr. J.C. Sager (United Kingdom), Rapporteur
Mr. E. Weis (Austria), Chairman
An expert of USSR was invited but was unable to attend

(2) Observer:

Mr. J.A. Bachrach (Luxembourg)

(3) In attendance for Infoterm:

Mr. H. Felber, director
Ms. M. Krommer-Benz
Mr. A. Manu

(4) Unesco:

Mr. W. Löhner, Division of the General Information Programme

1 Opening and announcements

Mr. Felber welcomed the members on behalf of the Austrian Standards Institute and introduced Ministerialrat Dübell of the Austrian Ministry for Building and Technology. Mr. Dübell stressed the importance of this meeting for the future development of Infoterm. His ministry in its role as supervisory agency of the Austrian Standards Institute was fully aware of the importance of terminology for the improvement of communication and understanding between nations and had therefore supported Infoterm financially since its inception.

He hoped the evaluation of this project would lead to closer collaboration among relevant international agencies under the guidance of Infoterm.

Mr. Löhner opened the meeting and summarised the purpose of the evaluation which had been suggested by the UNISIST Steering Committee in order to assess the study on the development of a network of organisations concerned with terminology and/or terminology documentation. This study had been undertaken in response to the First Infoterm Symposium on Terminology (Vienna April 9-11, 1975) and more specifically as a result of the recommendation made by the meeting for the evaluation of the International Information Centre for Terminology (Vienna June 1-3, 1976). The function of the meeting was to discuss the study and to advise on its feasibility and practical merits. The timing of this meeting was singularly appropriate since the Advisory Committee of the General Information Programme of Unesco had recently recommended a high priority for terminological work. He reminded members that they had been invited in their individual capacity as experts and that their advice would be seriously considered in the formulation of future activities for Infoterm.
He proposed and the meeting accepted Mr. Weis as chairman and Mr. Sager as rapporteur for the meeting.

2 Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Weis took the chair and proposed the adoption of the agenda which was accepted as follows:

2.1 Agenda

1 Opening by Dr. W. Löhner (Unesco)
2 Adoption of the Agenda
3 Introduction to the study by Mr. H. Felber (Director, Infoterm)
4 Discussion of the study
4.1 Present situation
4.2 The need for cooperation
4.3 Proposals for the creation of a network

5 Implementation of the network (TermNet)
6 Staffing implications
7 General conclusions
8 Final recommendations
9 Concluding remarks

2.2 Introduction of members

At the invitation of the chairman the members briefly introduced themselves and stated their particular field of expertise with regard to the study.

3 Introduction to the study

The Chairman invited Mr. Felber to introduce the report. Mr. Felber reported on the background of the study and explained the structure of the report. Mr. Felber reported that the "World Guide to Terminological Activities" had been published recently, which is a useful tool for the network to be established. He pointed out the considerable increase in terminological activities in the last two years and particularly the creation of AFTERM, NORDTERM and HISPANOTERM. All these developments fully justified the consideration of the establishment of the proposed network. It was agreed to discuss each major section separately, to draw up conclusions and to include recommendations in a re-drafted report which could then be presented as the meeting's joint opinion on the question in hand.

The meeting agreed that the circumstances were favourable for considering the extension of the functions of Infoterm in the proposed direction. The original impetus for this project and its implementation was even stronger now than at its first expression in 1975.

4 Discussion of the study

4.1 Present situation (sections 1-5)

The meeting noted the description of terminology work as a reliable guide

to its deliberations. It noted that the various desiderata expressed in section 3 were reflected in the proposals made in later sections.

The following specific observations arose out of the discussion:

4.1.1 The proposal "to set up some kind of world wide control mechanism within the network for terminology ... in order to control the creation of new terms" was considered impracticable for a future network. The problem of uncontrolled proliferation of neologisms had been recognised and pointed out by the evaluation meeting in June 1976, but even the task of registration of neologisms was at that time considered unrealistic for Infoterm. Intended network partners had themselves no control over the creation of neologisms in their respective fields of activity. It would, in fact be inimical to the creativity of language to control neologisms. Their adoption and propagation of use was a matter for national language organisations.

4.1.2 Considerations of the proposals contained in section 3.5 were deferred to the discussion of the project of a network.

4.1.3 The specification of users of terminologies and their needs was accepted but it was felt that a fourth category, namely that of terminologists and lexicographers should be specifically mentioned.

4.1.4 It was noted with satisfaction that the terminological principles elaborated by ISO/TC 37 "Terminology (principles and co-ordination)" were being revised. The need for this revision had been stressed by the previous evaluation meeting.

4.1.5 The recommendations contained in section 5.2.1 were accepted as important measures which the proposed network would partly assist in implementing. The World Guide to Terminological Activities was an important contribution to this endeavour.

4.1.6 Standardisation was assuming greater importance with the rapid development of data banks.

4.2 Analysis of the need for co-operation (section 7)

The meeting agreed with the analysis of the areas of terminology work which would benefit from closer co-operation and the general nature of such co-operation in each case. In the area of terminology preparation it was felt that there was an urgent need for:

- the widespread adoption of sound terminological principles,
- the general acceptance of compatible formats for terminology registration,
- information on terminological activities,
- information on terminology documentation.

The implementation of these measures would increase the quality of the work, save effort through the sharing of labour and ensure a wider divulgation of the results.

In the area of terminology documentation it was agreed that considerable labour could be saved by sharing information centres in this area. It was re-iterated that the volume and complexity of this work had increased to such an extent that a single organisation, i.e. Infoterm could no longer carry out this work. Primary information about terminology work was in any case required at other levels in the first instance, and retrieval would, therefore, in most cases be hindered rather than helped by resorting to a central organisation.

It was accepted that a network was the most suitable framework in which such cooperation would have the greatest likelihood of success. It was further established that Infoterm, suitably strengthened materially, was the most appropriate body to initiate the organisation of this network and to provide the guidance, cohesion and coordination of such a network.

4.3 Detailed discussion of proposals for the creation of a network (section 8)

There was unanimous agreement on the aims and objectives of the proposed network of organisations concerned with terminology (TermNet). The following detailed observations were made.

4.3.1 It was desirable to be more specific in the description of the functions of TermNet. In particular, the role of Infoterm should be more closely defined.

4.3.2 Infoterm should specify, at least provisionally, the conditions upon which collaboration was sought. This applied equally to the technical requirements which would have to be met by future TermNet partners as well as to the benefits partners would derive from collaboration. Here again the services Infoterm would provide directly might be enumerated.

4.3.3 There was a great diversity of needs and therefore a diversity of likely demands to be made by future TermNet partners as well as a diversity of services they could offer to their partners.

The proposed division of functions into two major areas addressed to terminology preparation and terminology documentation was unnecessarily complex since the major terminology preparing bodies likely to be linked through TermNet were at the same time both users and originators of terminology documentation.

There might be services Infoterm could provide exclusively to terminology preparing bodies and these should be organised separately.

4.3.4 There is a need to stress the general contribution TermNet would make to improve information processing and retrieval.

4.3.5 The implementation of TermNet was an operation which required several

phases. These might be more clearly delineated. As a first phase supranational organisations should be invited and national organisations should be involved only in the absence of higher level organisations.

4.3.6 The need for a regular publication by Infoterm for its network partners was considered essential (At present the Infoterm Newsletter appears as a standing column in the periodical "Lebende Sprachen"). This should take the form of a newsletter appearing as a separate publication as often as deemed necessary and at least quarterly. Its content should include information about Infoterm activities, terminological work in progress in member organisations and non-member organisations.
The contents should be made available for reprinting by other journals as hitherto. It was desirable to start this newsletter as soon as possible.

An offer made by AFTERM to assist in the publication of the newsletter was gratefully acknowledged.

4.3.7 Infoterm should take on the full responsibility for organising TermNet. It should be assisted by an advisory panel selected from among the members, other appropriate organisations, and individual experts. The nomination and appointment of the members of the advisory panel should in the first instance be made by Infoterm and Unesco.

Members of TermNet should be consulted in the selection.

4.3.8 Infoterm should assist TermNet members in the coordination of their activities with regard to other members by disseminating information, by advising on joint projects and by convening and organising meetings.

It was approved that the rapporteur should assist the Director of Infoterm in re-drafting the study on the development of a network for terminology information and documentation. This study would be useful for circulation to future members of TermNet.

5 Implementation of TermNet

It was agreed that this should be proceeded with immediately.
The following procedure and timetable was suggested.

5.1 A communication should be sent as soon as possible to a selected number of likely members inviting them to join TermNet.

This communication should include:

(1) The amended study on the development of a network for terminology information and documentation,

(2) A full description of the proposed structure, the services and benefits provided by TermNet.

(3) A statement of the functions of the advisory panel.

(4) A questionnaire requesting future partners to list areas in which they would wish to seek collaboration and any suggestion which might assist Infoterm in improving the network.

5.2 Infoterm should process the results of the enquiry, make adjustment to its proposals if necessary and as soon as possible convene the first meeting of the advisory panel.

5.3 According to the analysis of the enquiries a preliminary meeting of prospective TermNet partners could then be convened. TermNet could be officially established at such a meeting.

5.4 Eventually a TermNet users' committee may have to be formed. Infoterm would provide the secretariat for such a committee.

6 Staffing implications

Consideration of the document: Infoterm (Present and future tasks, staff enlargement)

The meeting considered the document from the point of view of the adequacy of the increase of staff proposed for the new tasks resulting from the implementation of TermNet.

It was recognised that there was unlikely to be an immediate opportunity of reaching this staffing level. It was accepted that Infoterm after adjusting its priorities had the staff to initiate the gradual implementation of the first phase of this programme.

The hope was expressed that further resources to employ staff for the effective operation of Infoterm's contribution to TermNet would be made available. In view of the remarkable productivity demonstrated by Infoterm since its inception the proposed staffing level was deemed to be adequate for TermNet as envisaged in the study.
The meeting did not express an opinion on the job descriptions since it was felt that Infoterm was well qualified to specify its own requirements.

7 General conclusions

7.1 Terminology work is carried out at every level of human activity and is fundamental to information and documentation.

7.2 The complexity of this work and the diversity of people engaged in it often leads to duplication of work and worse to the erection of barriers to communication quite contrary to the purpose and justification of terminology as a field of study.

7.3 The recognition of the importance of the widest possible consultation in this work and of the widest possible dissemination of its results has led to cooperation among many different organisations at a language or a subject level or both.

7.4 This cooperation has accelerated over recent years as the need to communicate across national, language and subject boundaries has increased.

7.5 As the sole agency created for the purpose of liaison and information at international level without language and subject restrictions, Infoterm already has contacts with the vast majority of organisations concerned with terminology.

7.6 Infoterm is thus in an exclusive position to assist in the establishment of closer links among such organisations.

7.7 The type and degree of collaboration is ultimately a question for each individual organisation, but Infoterm can act as catalyst to bring about joint enterprises.In some small measure Infoterm may itself engage in

joint projects with individual or groups of organisations.

7.8 From its experience Infoterm can demonstrate that cooperation in a network of relevant organisations can lead to greater efficiency and therefore reduction of cost. Efficiency can be achieved through division of labour, wider agreement on terminology and wider diffusion of the agreements reached.

7.9 The establishment of an open-ended, flexible network is the natural development for Infoterm. Only in this way can it continue to fulfill its role in the quickly changing and expanding field of terminology and in the improvement of its information and documentation service.

7.10 Other organisations look to Infoterm for leadership in the direction of closer cooperation through the creation of a network.

7.11 The general conditions of such a network are incorporated into the re-drafted study.

8 Final recommendations

The need for a network of organisations concerned with terminology has been amply demonstrated.
The time for the creation of such a network is right since such links are already being formed and organisations are expecting Infoterm to provide leadership in this direction. Infoterm has the expertise and standing to assist in the coordination of such a network.

It is therefore recommended that:

Infoterm should proceed forthwith to establish such a network in several phases commensurate with its resources. The fundamental purpose of Infoterm will be strenghtened by the introduction of such a network.

It is further recommended that:

Urgent consideration be given to the provision of additional staff so that Infoterm can develop the network to its full potential for

the benefit of improved information and documentation and multilingual communication as a whole.

9 Concluding remarks

The chairman requested the rapporteur to sum up the proceedings and this summary was accepted as a satisfactory basis for the report.

The chairman then thanked the members for their valuable advice and the rapporteur for his prompt and accurate summary. The director of Infoterm then thanked Mr. Löhner for the assistance Unesco had provided in carrying out this evaluation and the members of the meeting whose experience and expertise had greatly improved the proposals for the network.

He also thanked the chairman for his skill in conducting the meeting.